

# The People's Press.

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## The People's Press.

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March 31, 1871.

Wood's Object Lessons

IN BOTANY.

### Select Miscellany.

#### A SINGULAR DUEL.

Major Budford, called by way of eminence, "the Major," was the most noted duelist of the day. A dead shot, a perfect master of the fence, and in his enemies, utterly relentless, his name had become a terror to all who knew him.

In the midst of a knot of admiring friends, one day, the Major was discussing his last "affair," and complacently explained how it came that he mortally wounded his adversary, instead of killing him on the spot, when one of two gentlemen standing within hearing, suddenly advanced and struck him in the face. The spectators stood, aghast. What could have tempted the stranger to rush thus madly upon his fate? He was an old man. Already to appearance, had three score and ten years passed over his head. He must, indeed, have been weary of life, whose brief remnant he was ready to cast away so recklessly.

The Major was astonished. The very audacity of the act struck him with amazement.

"Is the provocation sufficient, or must I repeat it?" inquired his assailant.

The Major's first impulse was to return blow for blow. But fierce and violent as were his passions, he had schooled himself to complete mastery over them, and a moment's reflection told him how bootless, under such circumstances, would be a public brawl. The indignity he had received would admit of but one reparation, and that he determined to lose no time in seeking.

"The insult is sufficient," he answered, with forced calmness. "Oblige me by naming a friend—for your own name I care not—to whom I may refer one of my friends."

"This gentleman," replied the other, resuming the arm of his companion, "will return here in an hour, to confer with any one you may designate."

And the two strangers took their leave together.

At sunrise, on the following morning, the principals and their seconds made their appearance on the ground selected. No one else was present—not even a surgeon. The Major in his own past experience, never required one; and his opponent, it was plain, was careless of the consequence.

There was no necessity for delay. The preliminaries had been settled. The parties were to fight with pistols, at ten paces, the combat to continue until one or both had fallen. One condition had been insisted on by the stranger, which called an indignant blush to the Major's cheek, as it seemed to imply an imputation upon his honor, though he submitted to it with the best grace he could. It was that before placing the combatants the bodies of both should be inspected, to see that no secret protective device was employed by either.

The ground was measured, and the men placed. There was a marked contract between the two in more respects than years. The old man, erect and motionless as a statue, his white locks floating in the breeze, never once looked at his antagonist, though his side was turned. His face was stern and determined, but had nothing malignant in it. The Major, on the other hand, glared fiercely at his foe, seeming even to grudge him the few moments of life yet ecked out to him.

"Were he my father, I would kill him!" he answered, audibly, to some whispered expostulations of his second, who was evidently touched by the old man's venerable appearance.

The pistols were put in the hands of the principals, and the giving of the word explained.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"Ready," both answered.

Still the old man moved not, nor did he direct a single glance at his adversary. His eyes were fixed in front. His attitude was one of rapt attention. He seemed like one listening intently.

"Fire!"

Without changing the direction of his gaze, or other movement than that of his arm, which rose with the precision of a nicely adjusted machine, the old man brought his pistol to the level of his enemy's breast. For an instant he held it there. Still no look in the direction it pointed. Still the same appearance of eager listening.

The Major was in no hurry. He could afford to take his time with a man who held his pistol at random, without looking whitherward. He took deliberate aim. He was determined to make sure work. If his ball missed his adversary's heart, even the fraction of an inch, he would never make any pretensions to skill again.

The sharp report of the stranger's pistol was followed by a convulsive jerk of the Major's arm, causing the discharge of his weapon far wide of his mark, while he, staggering a few paces backward, fell heavily to the ground.

"Conduct me to him," said the old man.

The latter took his principal's arm, and led him to the prostrate form of the Major, whose second kneeling by his side, had torn open his garments, exposing to view the fatal wound in his breast, made by the stranger's bullet.

"Is your friend seriously hurt?" inquired the latter coolly.

"You can see for yourself, sir," the second answered.

"There you're in error," replied the other.

"There you're in error," replied the stranger.

The wounded man, who had by this time revived a little, and his second, looked at the stranger in astonishment. There was a fixity of look—that "bend" of the eyes on vacancy—which so unmistakably evinced the absence of sight.

"Who are you? and what was your motive in seeking this encounter?" the Major faintly murmured.

"First, are you in a condition to renew it?" inquired the stranger.

"There is no need—I am dying."

"When I have told you who I am," the stranger resumed, "you will scarce require my motives for what I have done. No wonder you have forgotten James Morton."

He continued, "for he is greatly changed, no doubt."

The dying man started, and groaned bitterly.

"But I have never forgotten you, Rich-

ard Budford, nor the injuries you have

done me. A cherished daughter, the pride

of my eyes, and the joy of her mother's

heart, you enticed from her home, deceiv-

ed by a sham marriage, and then aban-

doned her to die of a broken heart. My

son, and remaining child, in a rash at-

tempt to avenge his sister's wrongs, fell a

victim to your accursed skill. You even

robbed him of the ordinary chances of com-

bat, unequal as they would have been, by

encasing your cowardly body in concealed

armor. The loss of both our children un-

settled my wife's reason, and she died in a

mad-house. Could I have found you then,

I would have given you no chance for

your life; but valiant as you have always

professed to be, and coward as you are,

you feared and evaded me. Yet I knew

we should one day meet; and I registered

a vow, that when we did I would offer you

a sacrifice to your own infernal art.

Cost to the country of Middle-men and

Drummers.

### The Supply of Food.

#### The Washington Chronicle has this to say about middle-men and drummers:

It is estimated that New York city alone keeps in pay an army of 25,000 drummers, with an average salary of \$1,500, or \$37,500,000 in all. Allowing for traveling expenses \$4 per day for 150 days in the year, and the total expense amounts to \$52,000,000. Dividing this sum among 300,000 retail stores deriving their support from New York, and we find that they pay an average tax of \$175 per annum; for this sum ultimately comes off the retailers, and he must make it off his customers. Here, then, is a tax of \$52,000,000 levied in New York alone by the imperfect and unjust workings of our trading system for the support of a class of useless non-producers. Some time since we were accosted by an itinerant sub-agent of a sowing-machine company. Being supplied with the machine in question, we of course made no purchase. The agent, on the score of former acquaintance, was somewhat communicative in regard to his business, stating that he received ten dollars for every machine sold, and that he averaged about twenty sales per month, making his perquisites \$2400 per annum. We were subsequently informed that these machines, retailing at seventy-five dollars each, cost, when finished in the shop, about fifteen dollars. Here, then, is four times the cost of manufacture absorbed by the expense of marketing. We need no stronger proof that our commercial system is fearfully out of joint. If the manufacturer could dispose of his wares at a living profit alone, these machines could be afforded at one-third their present rates. But in the present false and unnatural arrangements of the market this cannot be. In order to get his manufacture before the public the retail price must be made five times as great as the original cost. We hopefully anticipate in the chapter of our social progress now opening, a relief from this difficulty.

#### A Modern Job.

A certain good-natured old Vermont farmer preserved his constant good nature, let what would turn up. One day, one of his men came in, bringing the news that one of his red oxen was dead.

"Is he?" said the old man.

"Well, he was always a brachy cuss."





